Amateur Radio Newsline(tm) Report 1390 April 2, 2004

Amateur Radio Newsline report number 1390 with a release date of Friday, April 2nd, 2004 to follow in 5-4-3-2-1.

The following is a Q-S-T. Ham radio helps with a rescue at sea, the Federal Emergency Management Agency clarifies its position on Broadband Over Powerlines as B-P-L technology brings lots of radio noise Manassas, Virginia. Hear it for yourself on Amateur Radio Newsline report number 1390 coming your way right now.

(Billboard Cart Here)

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RESCUE RADIO: VK HAM BRINGS BOAT TO PORT SAFELY - BY RADIO

A pair of Australian and American hams are credited with being a lifeline to a storm damaged boat with six people on board. The Australian was at his home QTHand the American was at sea on the stricken ship. Q-News Robert Broomhead, VK3KRB, in Waverly, Australia picks up the story from here:

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Bernie VK2ABN on March 4 was in QSO with VK2ABT/VK3ACA and heard a weak and distorted signal, KA7MWL Shawn, who was aboard a Ukrainian registered schooner sailing from Wellington NZ to Sydney Aust., sails had blown out and they were making slow progress just on 4 knots.

At that speed they had calculated that they would run out of fuel before reaching port. Bernie VK2ABN ascertained 6 people were on board, BUT NO EPIRB! All this information was relayed to Sea Safety Canberra.

With the schooners satellite communication system also out of action, the Ham aboard, Shawn KA7MWL operating around 5 watts on 7070 Khz was the only contact.

Sea Safety Canberra QSY'd from 8176 kHz to the 40 meter band but as their transmitter was in Charleville, SW Queensland, no contact could be established.

Bernie arranged a for sked in 24 hours time, this time things a lot better, radio and safety wise, the schooner expected in Sydney ahead

of previously estimated time.

As Bernie said: "I hadn't realised you can now call MAYDAY on the various DISTRESS frequencies but nobody is listening any more. Since the advent of GMDSS a computer scans the frequencies looking for encoded tones. If it finds one it attracts human intervention."

VK2ABN Bernie says " It was a bit like the Tony Hancock Radio Ham Sketch in retrospect, anyway that's what his wife thought and our telephone sure ran hot for a couple days!"

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According to Q-News, the Sydney Australia Water Police stayed in contact with VK2ABN to keep abreast of the situation. With no High Frequency facilities that could hear the stricken craft, they were totally reliant on ham radio.   (Q-News)

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THE BPL FIGHT: CLARIFYING FEMA'S CLARIFICATION ON BPL

The debate surrounding Broadband Over Powerline Internet access has taken a new twist. Opponents are now raising fears about the contents of a letter recently released in the FCC's BPL public comment files. It was sent by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's top administrator to FCC Chairman, Michael Powell. Opponents say the letter clearly shows FEMA is now reversing course on its vehement opposition to nationwide BPL deployment. Amateur Radio Newsline's Mark Abramowicz NT3V has the very latest

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The letter was written by Michael Brown, Undersecretary of Emergency Preparedness and Response in the Department of Homeland Security. That's where the Federal Emergency Management Agency was placed in President Bush's restructuring of agencies related to the security of the United States.

Brown's letter to Powell actually was briefly mentioned in February articles on the FCC's BPL action that were written for two nationally-circulated computer magazines. But it apparently got little notice and its contents were not fully detailed.

Now that the letter is part of the FCC BPL file, its contents are in the public arena.

Brown tells Powell in the letter dated January 8 that FEMA wants to clarify its December filing so it is "not misunderstood or misconstrued."

Brown goes on to say FEMA is aware that some of what he labels "distinct approaches" to BPL may cause interference to FEMA's H-F emergency communications network.

But then, and this is the section that has BPL opponents worried, Brown writes: "However, we continue to study the BPL proceeding and have not concluded there is a material interference problem or that all of the distinct technological approaches to BPL pose risk of interference."

Compare that to the language in FEMA's December 2003 filing on BPL with the commission prepared by Barry West, FEMA's chief information officer.

West writes: "FEMA has grave concerns regarding the interference that likely would be caused to government communications by unlicensed BPL systems."

Or this comment: "This interference will severely impair FEMA's mission-essential HF radio operations in areas serviced by BPL technology."

In an interview with a Philadelphia radio station, a FEMA spokesman insisted there is no material change in the agency's position.

The spokesman says Brown's letter was sent to Chairman Powell to clarify that FEMA is still studying the issue and recognizes and supports the FCC's desire for a greater broadband capability for the nation.

The spokesman says Brown wants to see more studies on the interference issue and is working with other federal agencies.

However, the FEMA spokesman emphasized that any deployment of BPL should not pose an interference threat to the agency's H-F emergency communications network.

Those close to the BPL debate say Brown's letter, has only muddied the agency's position and sections could be embraced by both sides.

We'll let you decide.

Come to our website: www.arnewsline.org and click on this week's script and select the Text script and scroll to this report to find the internet U-R-Ls leading directly to Brown's letter and FEMA's original December filing.

(Letter from Michael Brown, Undersecretary of Emergency Preparedness and Response, FEMA. January 8, 2004)

<http://gullfoss2.fcc.gov/prod/ecfs/retrieve.cgi?native_or_pdf=pdf&id_document=6516083909>

(FEMA's December 2003 filing)

<http://gullfoss2.fcc.gov/prod/ecfs/retrieve.cgi?native_or_pdf=pdf&id_document=6515292045>

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Mark Abramowicz, NT3V, in Philadelphia.

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In a communication posted to members of its Public Relations Reflector, the American Radio Relay League suggests avoiding references to the FEMA position for now in any BPL discussions or comments. (ARNewsline(tm))

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THE BPL FIGHT: BIG NOISE IN MANASSAS

BPL has come to Manassas, Virginia and the hams there say that its not fun to listen to:

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BPL audio

That's the racket being created by the latest of three Broadband Over Powerline or BPL installations opened in Manassas. This, as provided in a sound file on the www.W4OVH.org website, courtesy of George Tarnovsky, KE2AM. The interference level appears to be such that it would be all but impossible to hear a radio signal through it.

The kicker here is that this is reported to be an underground electrical feed that utilities claim are far less noisy than overhead wiring. However, having the wires underground does not seem to reduce the interference. At least not in this case.

And if you want to know more about the BPL hazard to America's communications, go get a copy of the of CQ. Joe Lynch, N6CL has an excellent analysis article in his "VHF Plus" column in the just out April issue of that magazine. (VHF Reflector, PR Reflector, W2VU)

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THE BPL FIGHT: SOUTHERN OREGON GOES GLASS

Meantime, to the West in Oregon there's some good news on the BPL front. It comes from southern Oregon where the obnoxious radio pollution of BPL has lost out to quiet fiber optic delivery.

According to Doug Beck, K6ZX, in the town of Merlin, a private company, forming public and private partnerships with local government has wired the city of Ashland with what's called the Ashland Fiber Network. It has also extended fiber to the city of Medford with some 74 miles of glass cable connecting all schools to

provide VOIP audio and video conferencing.

But that's not all. The partnership is also in the process of connecting to Grants Pass and will wire all the local schools and government offices as well. The best part is that all excess bandwidth is being made available to local citizens and wireless last mile technology is being explored to connect rural users.

Beck says over the VHF Reflector that the area is aiming to have a broadband connection available to all rural users without any Broadband over Powerlines in the area. (VHF Reflector)

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Break 1

>From beneath the Southern Cross in Auckland, New Zealand and from our studios in Los Angeles, California, this is the Amateur Radio Newsline, heard on bulletin stations around the world including the Metro Atlanta Telephone Pioneer Amateur Radio Club net in Atlanta Georgia.

(5 sec pause here)

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RESTRUCTURING: SWEDEN GOES CODE FREE

It now looks likely that Swedish radio amateurs with a Class 2 license which is the equivalent of our code free Technician class, will be allowed to operate on the High Frequency bands as of early April. The decision to drop the Morse code requirement for an HF bands license in Sweden had been postponed from the 1st of January. A note in the March issue of QTC, the Swedish national society's magazine, suggested that on or about April 1st is when the change will be made. (GB2RS)

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ENFORCEMENT: NO "DELIVER IT" ON 2 METERS

Using an illegal long range cordless telephone to deliver culinary delights is going to cost a New Jersey Chinese restaurant a good part

of its profits. This, after the FCC levies a $10,000 against the eatery for operating transmitting equipment on 2 meters without a license. The FCC's Daryl Duckworth, NN0W, has more:

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Duckworth: "A Notice of Apparent Liability to Monetary Forfeiture in the amount of $10000 went to Best Wok of Westville, New Jersey. An agent of the Philadelphia office had DF'd the signal on 145.8376 MHz and inspected the base and mobile units. The restaurant manager stated that he had purchased the long range cordless telephone system in another country and brought it to the United States to operate at the restaurant."

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The FCC citation issued to Best Wok indicated that the telephone in question is not FCC Part 15 certified and is illegal to use in the United States. (FCC, RAIN)

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ENFORCEMENT: IT AIN'T USER RIGHTS

A California ham is the latest to be told by the FCC that if he wants to challenge a repeater operators authority to kick him off a system, he will have to do it elsewhere. That the FCC will nor reconsider the matter.

The situation involves Mark A. Glover, KE6TTL of Garden Grove. Apparently, Glover has complained to the FCC about his being banned from using a repeater owned by the Catalina Repeater Association with the apparent blessing of the FCC. This in a letter from the regulatory agency to Glover back on February 2nd.

In responding to Glover's February 26th complaint, the FCC says that its letter of February 2nd explained the right of the repeater association to make such a request. Also, if Glover has an objection to the decision of the repeater owner, that he is free to pursue legal action locally. But says the FCC it won't be involved. There are no Commission hearing procedures are provided in such matters. (FCC)

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ENFORCEMENT: TWO PEOPLE - ONE CALL

The actions of a New York ham in obtaining a call sign have come under FCC scrutiny. Again, the FCC's Daryl Duckworth, N-N-Zero-W:

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Duckworth: "A letter went to Frank C. Richards, KG2IJ, of Moers New York concerning an application filed in 1995 where he requested the call KB4VU be changed to the next systematically assigned, to change his address to New York, and to renew the license. Frank C. Richards of Ft. Meyers, Florida, claims that he is the real licensee of KB4VU, and filed no application for a call sign or address changes and has never lived in New York."

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The FCC says that this raises questions about abuse of the licensing system and the agency is investigating. It has asked the New York Richards to provide documented information on where he previously lived in Florida, when he moved to New York and all FCC Amateur Service licenses that he previously held. (FCC, RAIN)

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WITH NEWSLINE: MENTORING PROGRAM UNDERWAY

Joe Eisenberg, K0NEB, who is running the database for the Roy Neal, K6DUE, Amateur Radio Mentoring Project says that the first matches have been made. These are in California with one being an e-mail only contact due to distance.

Joe says more match-ups are on the way. Hopefully as the database builds we will be able to make all matches face to face.

If you want to volunteer for the program or are in need of an Elmer to help you learn more, just e-mail us. The address is mentor@arnewsline.org.   (ARNewsline(tm))

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HAMFESTS: GAITHERSBERG - RIP

Some news from the hamfest circuit. After struggling to rebuild attendance from two moves the past four years, organizers in Maryland have canceled the 2004 descendant of what was once the popular "Gaithersburg Hamfest." This was a show that dated back to the 1950s. Amateur Radio Newsline's Newsline's Paul Courson, WA3VJB reports from Annapolis:

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"There appears to be no support for this event from the member clubs of the Foundation or their respective members," according to Dan Blasberg, KA8YPY, president of the Foundation for Amateur Radio (FAR).

The group consists of a coalition of ham radio clubs in the Maryland, Washington, and northern Virginia region, and has used hamfest revenue to fund scholarships. In recent years it co-sponsored the event with one of its member clubs, the Columbia Amateur Radio Association (CARA).

Expressing his dismay that only two people had stepped forward from FAR to help stage the hamfest that had been scheduled for Sept. 11th and 12th Blasburg, said the lack of volunteer help is "not fair" to "carry the burden of a project of this magnitude and scope."

Blasburg concluded "it has been decided by the leadership of FAR and CARA to cancel Fall-Fest 2004 (due) to lack of volunteer participation." His note initially went out on an email reflector and since has circulated widely.

Blasburg this past week was hopeful his note would prompt people to step forward to help, but then, on March 27th, hamfest officials were openly talking about the cancellation and the withdrawal of the site reservation in West Friendship, Maryland.

What used to be the popular Gaithersburg Hamfest relocated to a parking lot outside a baseball field in Bowie Maryland in 1999, struggling as a local fleamarket no where near the size of the original site. A move to the Howard County Fairgrounds in 2002 did not help matters much, with attendance gaining marginally.

With the old Gaithersburg Hamfest now GONE, the successor as the largest in the mid-Atlantic region may now be the Timonium Hamfests at the Maryland State Fairgrounds north of Baltimore, where two clubs sponsor a Spring and a Fall Timonium

Paul Courson, WA3VJB, Annapolis reporting for Newsline.

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Thanks Paul. (ARNewsline(tm))

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HAMVENTION 2004: THE FCC WILL BE THERE

Some much more positive news comes from Dayton, Ohio. This with word that two of ham radio's most popular speakers will be back at Hamvention 2004. Of coarse we are talking about the FCC's chief ham radio rules enforcer Riley Hollingsworth, K4ZDH, and FCC rules man Bill Cross, W3TN.

The two were missing from last years Hamvention due to a scheduling snafu. As planners put together this years outing, the duo was among the very first scheduled in. You will find them holding forth from on Saturday, May 15th from 10 a.m. to noon in Hara Arena Meeting Room 1. If you want to know exactly what's happening at the FCC and how it will affect ham radio, this is the event to be at. (ARNewsline (tm), Hamvention(r))

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HAMFESTS: THE URUNGA RADIO CONVENTION

And speaking about hamfests, heres on that's a bit unusual. Its the annual Easter Convention scheduled for Saturday the 10th and Easter Sunday the 11th of April at the Senior Citizen's Hall in the city of Urunga, Uganda. Events include a 3.5 MHz mobile hunt, pedestrian on 2 meter T-Hunt, a 2 meter mobile multi transmitter hunt and lots more. Sunday will feature the famous Urunga scramble. A mini contest to see who can make the most contacts in 30 minutes. Its a great show, if you happen to be in Uganda an Easter weekend. (Q-News)

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BREAK 2

This is ham radio news for today's radio amateur. From the United States of America, We are the Amateur Radio Newsline with links to the world from our only official website at www.arnewsline.org and

being relayed by the volunteer services of the following radio amateur:

(5 sec pause here)

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HAM HELP: GET WELL WALLY

Unless you live in the American West where this newscast is produced, you are not aware of the contributions of Wally Foster, N6CDJ. Those who do know that Wally has been a huge contributor to ham radio in the state of California.

Over the years, N6CDJ has been responsible for thousands of hours dedicated to installing the region's packet radio system. He has also introduced many to packet and APRS and volunteers a lot of time to emergency services, fundraising, climbing towers and doing a first-rate job with repeater and station installations.

Wally's in a tough personal battle right now. Please drop him a QSL with a "get well Wally" message top help keep his spirits up during a trying time. You can send your wishes to N6CDJ at his callbook address. (AA6JR)

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EMERGING TECHNOLOGY: MESH NETWORKS RADIO RELAY SYSTEM

On the emerging technology front, Mesh Networks, whose emergency-response devices communicate through each other rather than through a centralized command is expanding its technology. This, to work on other kinds of wireless equipment including radios used by emergency service communicators. Rick Johnson, KA9VZD, has more:

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Originally developed by the U.S. military, Mesh system of networking lets individual radios serve as repeaters and relay points. This means that a firefighter too far inside a building to reach his command post can communicate with a nearby firefighter, whose radio will then repeat the conversation to the next closest radio. This is similar to hams using a programmable mobile radio to extend the hand of their 2 meter or 70 centimeter H-T..

And just like hams have been experimenting, Mesh networks can transmit video, data and position information in addition to audio. But heres the departure fronm what radio amateurs are doing. The Mesh technology also has the ability to create super-sized Wi-Fi hot spots. This in itself gives the system wide utility in public service applications.

For the Amateur Radio Newsline, I'm Rick Johnson, KA9VZD, reporting.

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Mesh Networks says that it is recognized as the leading developer of high performance and scaleable mobile ad hoc networking technology. More about the company and its products is on-line at www.meshnetworks.com. (Press release)

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HAM AWARDS: THE VP5 YOUNG CONTESTER

If you are age 18 or younger, a licensed radio amateur and have been dreaming about going on a D-X contest, listen up. This next story is for you.

For the second year in a row, a competition has been announced for keen young contest operators with just such a dream. The winner gets an all-expenses paid trip to the Turks and Caicos Islands to operate with the VP5X Contest Group in the CQ World Wide DX phone contest this October.

Applicants must send an essay of 500 words or more telling how they got started in ham radio. It also must describe the person who helped them get started in the hobby and why you should be selected for this contest DX'pedition to VP5.

The winner must have his or her parents' written permission to make the trip on their own. Parents may accompany the winner at their own expense. All entries should be sent by e-mail to contests@vp5x.com by the 31st of August. (GB2RS)

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HAM AWARDS: 2004 YHOTY NOMINATIONS BEING SOUGHT

And while we are at it, its time to announce the opening of the nominating period for the 2004 Amateur Radio Newsline Young Ham of the Year Award. This program is open to any FCC licensed youngster age 18 or younger residing in the contiguous 48 states. One who has made a significant contribution to the community, the nation or ham radio though the United States Amateur Radio Service.

As we have said in years past, this award is not a contest for a prize. The person selected "Young Ham of the Year" is judged on his or her contributions to society through Amateur Radio. By way of example, a youngster whose only claim to fame is that of being licensed as an Extra at age four would not necessarily be judge as having made a significant contribution to the Amateur Radio service. On the other hand, a 14 or 15 year old Novice or Technician running a net during a major disaster or crisis would definitely be given consideration.

More information and a downloadable on-line nominating form is at our website. That's in cyberspace at www.arnewsline.org. The cutoff for nominations this year is midnight on Tuesday, June 31st. (ARNewsline (tm))

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DX

In D-X, W3EF reports that the 3B9C dxpedition has already made over 110,000 contacts and with any luck will soon be the biggest dxpedition in history. He says that besides the sheer volume, this has also been a carefully planned and executed operation with strict attention to details such as propagation on all bands to all regions. W3EF says it has been an absolute blast with a wonderful team from all over the world. At airtime the 3B9C operation continues. (W3EF)

In other D-X news, word that K5CM, N5KW and W5AO plan to operate portable VP5 from North Caicos island through the 7th of April. The island counts as NA-002 for the IOTA awards. (GB2RS)

Also, F8DVD, will be active slash JW from Svalbard on 80 to 10 meters to the 10th of April. He says that although it will be very hard to make contacts on 80 meters due to the very short night, he will make several attempts to do so. (GB2RS)

Lastly, PA9JJ will be active as C56JJ from Gambia until the 5th of April. Look for him especially on the WARC bands and on RTTY and PSK

31. For all these operations, QSL as directed on the air. (GB2RS)

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THAT FINAL ITEM: FCC MAY MANDATE IONESPHERIC DELAY

And finally, a little-known provision of a bill to crack down on indecency on the airwaves may directly affect Amateur Radio. It went into effect at 00:01 UTC on April 1st. Roving reporter Pierre Pullinmyleg, F0OL, reports:

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I'ts a rather -- er -- interesting -- audio only -- April 1st report. To hear it download the newscast MP3 file at http://www.arnewsline.org/quincy If you miss Pierre this week you will have to wait another year before he returns.

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Thank you, Pierre, and we hope you can get back to warmer weather without any -- er -- long delay. (F0OL)

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NEWSCAST CLOSE

With thanks to Alan Labs, AMSAT, the ARRL, the CGC Communicator, CQ Magazine, the FCC, the Ohio Penn DX Bulletin, Radio Netherlands, Rain, the RSGB and Australia's Q-News, that's all from the Amateur Radio Newsline. Our e-mail address is newsline @arnewsline.org. More information is available at Amateur Radio Newsline's(tm) only official website located at www.arnewsline.org. You can also write to us or support us at Amateur Radio Newsline(tm), P.O. Box 660937, Arcadia, California 91066 in the U-S-A.

For now, with Bill Pasternak, WA6ITF, at the editors desk, I'm Jim Meachen, ZL2BHF, in Auckland, New Zealand, saying 73 and we thank you for listening. Amateur Radio Newsline is Copyright 2004. All rights reserved.